

# W Cape enjoys boat-building boom

## SA's top international manufacturer plans to open new yard in Atlantis

By STAFF WRITER

Plans by South Africa's top international boat-builder to expand locally have been hailed by Western Cape premier Ebrahim Rasool.

Robertson & Caine, which launched almost 100 luxury catamarans in 2006 and will add a new model Powercat – the Leopard 47PC – to its production list this month, decided this week to open a new boat-building yard in Atlantis.

But the decision depends on acquiring publicly owned land for the expansion – and that land will be put out on a public tender process early next year.

The planned 200 000m<sup>2</sup> yard

is expected to provide jobs for 700 “highly skilled” people.

Rasool said the growth of the boat-building industry had created a need for his office to monitor developments. While welcoming the company's proposed expansion, he did not offer any guarantees about the land issue.

“The Western Cape has a long history of boat-building skills. We salute Robertson & Caine for their decision to expand locally,” he said.

The company's director, Ellian Perch, welcomed Rasool's support.

“This is another sign to us that we are taking the correct decision to expand.

“At one stage there was some thought given to moving our operations to Ireland, where we were welcomed with open arms, but in truth we were always looking to ensure a local expansion because we believed it would make sound financial sense,” said Perch.

Some estimates put the value of the industry between R1 billion to R1.5bn.

Perch said this was probably inflated.

“However, with our planned new yard in Atlantis, we could start generating massively increased turnover for the economy of the Western Cape and in addition create hundreds of new jobs,” he said.

The decision by Robertson & Caine to expand in the province was made easier by the unequivocal support of one of the world's foremost multi-hulled boat designers, Gino Morelli, who will be joining the company in January.

Morrelli designed the yacht that won the Americas Cup for the United States in 1987.

Morrelli was also on the crew of the yacht and is a legend in the international yachting community.

“What impressed me most when we were investigating the potential for expanding the operations of Robertson & Caine in the Western Cape was the high level of skilled labour

there is here.

“There were many factors in Ireland's favour, but ultimately it made the most financial sense to build the new facility in Atlantis,” said Morrelli.

Perch said the success of the planned Atlantis operation depended on a government tender process that has seen a moratorium placed on developments in the area.

“We now need the support of government to ensure that we can obtain the right land in Atlantis,” said Perch.

Last week the provincial government called on the national treasury to realise the need for increased support for the industry.

Herman Jonker, manager of marine marketing at the Department of Economic Development and Tourism in the Western Cape, said the department, in conjunction with the City of Cape Town, provided industry bodies with R500 000 in annual funding.

“We would like to make a more meaningful contribution to the (boat-building) industry, but that is really dependent on the contribution of the national government,” said Jonker.

Perch said one way that government could illustrate this commitment was by making land in Atlantis available.

But Andre Human, acting

manager for disposals and acquisitions at the City of Cape Town, said the tender process would see land in Atlantis released to the market by the end of January.

“We are very excited about your (Robertson & Caine's) project and would very much like to accommodate you immediately.

“Unfortunately, legislation requires that we follow a tender process to release city land,” Human said.

Perch said the company wanted to engage government on all levels to try and reach a solution to the land issue so as to be able to start building in Atlantis as soon as possible.